Vittorio Costantini l'ho conosciuto personalmente pochissimo tempo fa; ne conoscevo i lavori, che ammiravo. Ho confuso con un certo Amadi che aveva esposto alla Mostra del "Mille Anni di Arte del Vetro Veneziano", stupito che quelle opere fossero così simili a quelle che ammiravo passando davanti ad un laboratorio in Calle del Forno, che credevo appartenesse ad un certo Vittorio Costantini (almeno secondo quello che mi aveva detto il mio amico Livio "Sacaro"). Ebbene,

I met Vittorio Costantini personally a very short time ago. I knew his work, which I admired. I got him mixed up with a certain Amadi who had shown at the "A Thousand Years of Venetian Glass" Exhibition, amazed that there were works so similar to those I admired in a workshop I passed in Calle del Forno, which I thought belonged to a certain Vittorio Costantini (at least that was what my friend Livio "Sacaro" had told me). Well, those works were not by
Amadi, a name which hailed from Burano, but by Vittorio Costantini, also from Burano, whom I had admired in Calle del Forno.

I kept track of him at other exhibits until I decided to invite him, together with other great lampwork artists such as Cesare Toffolo (my friend Livio Rossi had died shortly before) to Vannes-le-Chatel for a symposium which gathered the most qualified glass artists in Europe.

Vittorio Costantini was born in Burano in 1944. His story was like so many others like me, he was the son of a fisherman and a lacemaker, and began to work in a furnace at a very young age. He was lucky to get his first experience in the Gino Cenedese glassworks, with a talented master whose severity matched only his modesty, Enrico Rossi “Sucaro”, father of Livio who, after serving as assistant to his father at Cenedese and Salviati, sat out to do lampwork on his own, in the footsteps of that great master Gianni Tosé “Mustegada”. Vittorio followed his master to Salviati, then owned by the Camerino family, where he perfected his technique.

There were other great masters and great designers who came to leave their works made, and there were showrooms to stock on the Grand Canal. It was a great learning experience for Vittorio Costantini.

In the meantime, perhaps in emulation of his assistant Livio “Sucaro”, he bought a flamethrower (he was then 70 years old) and practiced with it over the summer holidays, to earn a living on the beaches around Venice.

Like everyone else, he began his lampwork making souvenir items, all kinds of animal “families” and small gift items, but he soon began his attempts at new subjects and new colors. He continued to work in the furnace until 1972 when he finally decided to open his own business, and to stay clear of the standardized production which kept him in the souvenir market and which had become the mainstay of the island's production.

These were years of challenges, of silence and sacrifice, which led to the technical innovations that slowly revealed him as an artist in the eyes of collectors and scholars. In the 1981 exhibition “Murano Glass Today” held at Palazzo Grassi, Ludovico de Santillana presented 36 butterflies which then became and still are his hallmark. The following year, for the Glass Art Millenium in Venice, at the Palace of the Corner Museum, he triumphed with a series of butterflies, a dragonfly and a praying mantis. His poetics, only thus can his mystery can be defined, sublimating in the liquid transparencies of his nuances, a world which transfigures nature, where his butterflies, fish and insects live with a life which is more than real, his hands manipulate the memories of his childhood fishing trips, the lagoon blooming with strange flowers whose nectar was sucked away by the widest variety of insects, nature that he studied, analyzed and reproduced in that divine, inimitable, incomparable material that is glass.

Vittorio Costantini does not produce a glass menagerie. Like Jacques Prévert's children, he builds a cage for memories, leaving the door open so that they might slip in, he puts sea salt on the fish that has just got...
produzione per turisti, le “famiglie” dei vari animali, l’oggettino regalo ma cerchi di togliearti al più presto dall’articolo usuale, dai soliti colori, Rimane in forma fino al 1972 quando decide finalmente di mettersi da solo, di togliersi dalla produzione ormai standardizzata, togliendosi da quel mercato souvenir turistico che’era diventata la produzione dell’isola. Furono anni di sfide, di silenzio, di rimorsi, godendo però delle innovazioni tecniche che via via lo imposero come un creatore a collezionisti e studiosi. Ludovico de Santillana, nella mostra del 1981 “Vetri Murano oggi” (Palazzo Grassi), presentò 36 farfalle che divennero e sono il suo simbolo.
L’anno dopo, per il Millennio dell’Arte Vetaria a Venezia, al Palazzo Ducale, si impose con una serie di farfalle, una libellula e una mandrite religiosa. La sua poesia, perché così bisogna chiamare oramai la sua maestria, sublima nelle trasparenze liquide delle sue sfumature, un mondo che trasfigura la natura: le sue farfalle, i suoi pesci, i suoi insetti vivono di una vita più vera, le sue mani manipolano i suoi ricordi: le pesche infantili, le barriere fiorite di strani fiori cui succhiavano il nettare gli insetti più diversi, una natura studiata, analizzata, riprodotta nella divina, inimitabile, incomparabile materia che è il vetro. Non è uno zoo di vetro quello di Vittorio Costantini. Come i bambini di Jacques Prévert costruisce gabbie di ricordi, lasciandole le porte aperte per farli entrare, mette il sole grosso sul pesce che ha visto sguizzare, immagina il fiore dove si poserà il suo insetto e poi, dopo averli così creati, cancella in un sol tratto le trappole. Le gabbie immaginate, il magico sole, ed il fiore e le sue creature sono come ognuno se le immagi-
na, più vere delle vere perché tutto è bello quello che si ama. In Lorena ho conosciuto un uomo che ha il dono di creare, con la più antica tecnica vetaria, un mondo fanta-
stico. Quando ti fissa lo sguardo, vi leggi curiosità, voglia di capire, i suoi occhi chiedono risposte che solo lui riesce a trovare. Credo sia così. E’ stata la curiosità che ha stimolato l’imprenditiva di tutti i grandi artisti e l’abilità manuale, la maestria ne ha centuplicato la voglia di andare ancora più avanti, in perpetua sfida con se stessi. Per Vittorio Costantini, c’è anche una musicalità antica, che sta purtroppo, scomparendo, every under his very eyes, he imagines the flower on which his insect will sit and then, after creating them just like that, he wipes away the traps, the imaginary cages, the magic sail, and the flower and the creatures are just like everyone imagined them, more real than real because everything we love is beautiful. In Lorena I met a man who has a gift for creating a fantasy world with the most ancient of glassworking techniques. When he looks at you, his eyes brim with curiosity, with the will to understand. They ask questions only he can answer.
That’s how I think it went.
Curiosity stimulates the imagination and the manual skill of all the great artists, their talent multiplies their desire for progress, the constant challenge against their own selves. Vittorio Costantini embodies an ancient musicality which, unfortunately, is on the verge of extinction.
Trad. Olga Barnine

1 Vittorio Costantini nel suo laboratorio - Vittorio Costantini in his studio
2 Farfalla - Butterfly
3 Scarabeo - Beetle
4 Farfalla - Butterflies
5 Stella marina - Sea star
6 Lucertole - Lizards